

themselves, 'the innumerable men who were forced to do things for which they were not individually suited — play rugby rather than the piano, laying concrete rather than cook interesting meals, slave on an assembly line when they might have preferred looking after children' (p.289). After reading this book no New Zealand man will ever be quite the same again — or so the publisher promises on the back cover. While an author can hardly be taken to task for the excesses of his publisher's hyperbole, readers' responses to *A Man's Country* will in part be determined by their attitude to the evangelical mission interwoven with his analysis.

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The Fourth Labour Government. Radical Politics in New Zealand. Edited by Jonathan Boston and Martin Holland. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1987. 261pp. NZ price: \$22.50.

IN THEIR introductory overview, the editors of *The Fourth Labour Government* quote David Lange's (1986) view that his government presented a real challenge to the political analyst. The Prime Minister told the NZPSA Conference that year that 'the complexities of a period of rapid change call for a new level of sophistication in political commentary'. He regretted that 'there is a lack of good in-depth political analysis' in the news media, a statement of fact which no one would seriously contest.

Boston and Holland present this collection of essays as a contribution to a debate which has, alarmingly, scarcely surfaced. They point out, however, that the volume does not cover many (one might say most) important areas of public policy; education, employment, health, housing, social welfare, energy, and transport, to name only those absences mentioned by the editors. They also admit that 'readers will find virtually nothing here on questions relating to gender, race, violence and environmental protection'.

Even further pre-empting the critical reviewer, Boston and Holland point out that in the areas actually covered such as wages policy, the reorganization of the state sector, and defence policy the analysis is 'sometimes limited and incomplete... partly because the precise nature of the government's approach had yet to be announced at the time of writing'. Indeed, given that all the contributions seem to have been written well before the end of 1986 for a May 1987 publication date, the title of the book is a misnomer.

What then is this book? In essence, it is a collection of think-pieces, the substance of which ought to have been published in weekly and monthly journals during the course of the government's first two years in office. Alternatively, the essays may be interpreted as working papers — what might be produced, let us say, for a weekend confabulation of social scientists seeking to locate the structural changes stemming from 20-odd months of government activity and to fashion tools for analysis which might have explanatory force. There are glimmerings of an agenda for future interpretations in most of the essays. But the constraints of space and time lamented by the editors vitiate much of the work.

Jack Vowles summarizes the shifts in the Labour Party's ideological underpinnings since its beginnings. He parallels this with an equally succinct account of alterations in the balance of electoral support and the composition of party activists and Members of Parliament. The two parts are, however, essentially unresolved; more time, more space, please. Nigel Roberts reviews the behaviour of opposition parties in difficult circumstances. He argues, cogently enough, that Downs's economic theory of democracy may

still be applicable. But his argument could only be advanced with data which does exist — in the party offices, but not in the public domain.

Nine months before the election, Vowles suggests that Labour's new electoral support is vulnerable and Roberts opines that the electorate may still discern a more left (less right?) and more right distinction. Both are accurate observations; neither gets us much further forward.

Geoff Skene tells us about parliamentary reform and suggests it is all for the good, but not enough without other measures. Such measures may, or may not be, forthcoming. He ends where a debate might begin if informed opinion were accompanied by some solid research. 'The current influence of party and Caucus on Parliament' is not, after all, a matter on which much is known above the level of gossip. Jerome Elkind faces a similar problem. He writes on a Bill of Rights which was then, as now, holed up somewhere in the machinery.

The absence of any measurable outcomes after so short a period of vauntedly radical government activity does help to produce a certain air of academic distance. So does the fact that few of the contributors appear to have actually spoken to any of the actors in the drama they purport to analyse. There is a distinct feeling in the collection that the contributors believe that the statute and the organization chart are the reality.

Changes in the structure of cabinet committees and the reorganization of the public sector may have altered the constitutional relativities. But it is almost certainly not in the direction that John Roberts suggests. He lauds the exclusion of officials from cabinet committees which he assumes to be the policy-determining bodies. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that there is at least a question about whether it is officials or Cabinet Ministers who have been excluded from the policy process. The Cabinet Policy Committee may indeed have 'clarity, coherence and integration' as its objective; but it has operated less in the area of policy than in the co-ordination of government propaganda.

The key to decoding the political history of this period may be the story of how the government seized the definitions and how the party kept sufficient control to win the election. The legacy of that first term remains for historians to evaluate. Meanwhile, it is perhaps most effectively encapsulated in the closing paragraph of Bob Gregory's chapter on public sector reorganization. In quite the best and most substantial essay in the collection, Gregory takes an enlightening tour through the critical literature of earlier periods, when efficiency and objectives were also in vogue. 'In these times', he writes, 'when virtually all politicians are scurrying to carry the banner of market-led efficiency. . . where can a people turn when, sooner or later, it becomes apparent that much more is at stake than a narrow economic logic might suggest?'

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The Life and Death of Official Social Research in New Zealand 1936-1940. By J. H. Robb. VUW Occasional Papers in Sociology and Social Work No.7, Wellington, 1987. 96pp. NZ price \$6.00.

WITH SUCH a title, how can one help but be intrigued? After all, don't we still have a few social science graduates beavering away in government departments doing 'official' research? This leads to one of the disappointments of this little volume. Professor Robb fails to develop what seems a striking contrast between research in government then and